



On culture, education and community: Engaging as learners and leaders in Malawi

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Summary

Malawi has faced myriad foundational issues through its period of post-colonial independence. These issues include, but are not limited to: food security, fresh water availability, economic viability, impaired educational opportunities, decaying transportation networks, and energy dependence.

However, in a postcolonial context (Childs and Williams, 1997), we are seeing new leadership paradigms emerge, particularly with the evolutionary decline of Western-derived epistemology along with the increasing espousal of decolonized thought processes (Jack et. al, 2011).

As non-governmental organizations and other transnational entities engage to provide more access to competent higher education, how do indigenous institutions work to preserve the cultural & community values unique to the nation while still endeavoring to fashion highly competitive, globally engaged and innovative leaders?

Given the recent untimely death of President Bingu Mutharika, this research takes on even more significance. To avoid a power vacuum and the chaos that would surely ensue, generating and sustaining

a continued sense of community and “connectedness” is essential.

Through interviews, observations, case studies and power-sensitive conversations, we will evaluate the leadership landscape in Malawi as a part of the emerging global normative synthesis (Etzioni, 2004) by aligning it to the multiple and complex developmental challenges faced by individuals in this region. The results of this research will reflect the rich cultural heritage of Malawians while embracing the “connected knowing” of the diaspora.

This research endeavors to establish an idealized framework for the practice of leadership development within a transitioning cultural and contextual environment by leveraging the use of indigenous research methodologies (Chilisa, 2012). These methods will characterize the engagement with informants and collaborators as well as generate genuine, informed portrayals of the prevailing conditions.

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